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which you maintain to be the basis of your claims, and then show, from those early writings which we possess, that their authors did really, by their own words, give to them that interpretation which you now give. This you will not attempt to do.

In point of fact, what I am now requiring is the only proof, by your own principles, open to you. For, you do not permit men to exercise their own judgment upon those passages of Scripture which contain articles of faith. Infallibility you cannot assume when called on to prove it. Take, then, now, the questions at issue in our present discussion, the infallibility of, either Church or Pontiff—which it be, or whether it be of both, you have nowhere yet decided—take your present doctrine of the Pontiff's supreme jurisdiction of power over the whole Church of Christ. How will you proceed in the Scriptural proof? What is your rule for the interpretations of the passages you adduce? It must be one of three things. The natural judgment of men duly exercising the same reason which they use in all matters of practical importance; or it must be infallibility interpreting them; or the universal authority of the Fathers testifying, by their united sanction, to the truth of your present interpretation.

But the first of these methods you prohibit; the second you cannot assume when called on to prove it. You have, therefore, nothing left but to test the truth of your doctrines by the only criterion which remains, and which you assert to exist—the according and universal consent of the Fathers.

Here again your pretensions have driven you into a fatal difficulty. If your Church did not assert that there really was such an according witness from the earliest times—if she did not allege that there really was a flowing stream of consent testimony to the truth of her doctrines—it is manifest she would have no proof at all left her. Such testimony she does assert; and she has succeeded in imposing upon her members the reception of an assertion instead of the truth of a fact. She has so jumbled together infallibility with assertion, that her members do not distinguish. They take her infallibility not only as a guarantee for interpretations of Scripture, but likewise as proof for the truth of historic allegations. They do not limit the claim to the proof of doctrines from the Bible, but believe, moreover, that she is as infallible when asserting a fact, as when deriving a doctrine; as a witness or as an interpreter.

My present position is this—your pretensions have forced you to make a claim which is fatal to you. Equally fatal would it have been had you not made it. Prohibiting the exercise of private judgment upon passages of Scripture containing articles of faith debarred from assuming infallibility when called on to prove it, you had no option, because no other proof of your pretensions, but the dogmatic averment that there really did exist one united voice of all antiquity deposing to the truth of your doctrines. Nothing less than this could prove your case. It would not do simply to say that some Fathers held your views; for if there was any difference of opinion among them, this would be to let in what you, with so much worldly wisdom, so well prohibit—private judgment. Hence, you were constrained, by your position, and because of your pretensions, to hazard the daring assertion, that there really did exist—that full proof can be produced of its existence—the consent authority of the Fathers deposing, with full unanimity, to the existence of your modern doctrines in the Church of Christ from the earliest period. This you do assert; this you do teach; and this I shall now put you to prove in the two questions which we are at present discussing; and here I say your pretensions will fall by their own weight.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

ARE THE PRIESTHOOD SINCERE?

[We have great pleasure in presenting to our readers a translation of the following letter from the Abbé Miel, which we think valuable, not only as coming from the pen of one intimately acquainted with the state of the priesthood in France, of which he was so lately a distinguished member, but as evincing the same spirit of Christian moderation which rendered his former letter, published in our September number, so touchingly interesting.]

(TRANSLATION.)

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR—I have every day occasion to observe that many evangelical Christians are persuaded that the greater part of the Roman Catholic priesthood are wanting in sincerity, and do not themselves believe in what they are commissioned to teach to others. That it may be so, more or less, in Protestant countries, is possible, though I am not aware of it. But as concerning the countries where the Roman system is dominant, and especially as concerning France, of which the clergy everywhere enjoy particular and deserved consideration, I know, and owe it to truth, as well as to justice, to say, that the clergy in general do not feel the least doubt with regard to the doctrines which they preach in the name of Rome. How that comes to pass, and what is the nature of that sincerity, it will not be difficult nor,

perhaps, needless to explain, and such is the object of this letter.

If there be any one point of its organisation in which the Church of Rome shows herself particularly skilful, it is beyond contradiction in the education of her clergy. You cannot imagine how marvellously everything is combined in order to fix firmly in the intellect and affections of candidates for orders what is called faith—faith, be it remarked, not in our Saviour, nor in Scripture, but faith in the Church herself. What precautions are taken to prevent a doubt from reaching the understanding, or to repel it victoriously if ever it should present itself there! The principles inculcated in young candidates for holy orders, the lessons given to them, the books placed in their hands, every thing concurs and tends to the same object. And these operations are certain of success, because they are directed against simple, unsuspicious souls, who, as it were, lend themselves of their own accord, without resistance, to the impressions. The seminaries are recruited, in fact, from the country districts. The pupils are, for the most part, children of the lower orders, who have attracted attention by their happy disposition, by their assiduity in attending religious ceremonies, and by the docility they display to the lessons of the priests. When they quit their families to enter the first or lower seminaries they certainly have but little knowledge of religion. This, however, they know perfectly well (for they have been taught it from their infancy), that in order to be Christians they must believe firmly, and under pain of damnation, everything which is believed and taught by the Roman Church. And as they have been equally taught that the Church means the parish priest and every priest approved by the bishop, they have an unbounded reliance in the word of the priest. The priest is in their eyes a man altogether beyond and above the rest of mankind, he exercises over them all the ascendancy not only of learning and virtue, of which they form to themselves a very high opinion, but of a celestial mission of a divine nature. They listen to him as the oracle of God, not admitting the possibility of deceiving them, or of his deceiving himself. His lessons are the more impressive from being given with all the force of simple affirmations—“That is so;” “That is not so.” So far is this carried, that they have not even an idea of a religious discussion or controversy. Even in the world, in which they are received before their admission to the college, and where they again appear from time to time during the vacations, no discussion is ever heard upon these subjects. By common agreement, in all Roman Catholic countries, the study of religion is considered the business exclusively of the priest, the believer has only to gather at the foot of the pulpit the fruits of that study. The few exceptions which might be produced against this rule would only serve to establish its truth.

Nevertheless, when the understanding of the pupil of the seminary is a little more developed—when he commences to make use of his own judgment in the domain of natural science—it sometimes happens that reason endeavours to vindicate her right to be heard in matters of religion also, and seeks to qualify the doctrine presented to her as alone containing eternal truth. But the confessor is ever at hand to guard his spiritual son against this dangerous snare. Reason is silenced as being merely the voice of pride; or else is deluded by the promise of having her suggestions examined at another stage, during the term of study at the upper seminary.

At last arrives the solemn epoch, in which the theological education is completed—an epoch the most critical of all. If the edifice of belief does not crumble then, it is usually fixed for ever. Every history which is not in every point in perfect harmony with the doctrine of Rome is strictly forbidden. Even Bailie's *Treatise on Theology*, which has for a number of years been almost exclusively used in our seminaries in France, has just been placed in the index of forbidden works, on the ground that it does not profess *Ultramontanum* with sufficient openness. This is the doctrine which must, at any sacrifice, prevail. Whether knowingly or not, the teachers do not hesitate, with this object in view, to mis-state facts and to misquote texts, as I shall soon have occasion to demonstrate. And yet, upon the slightest reflection, how flimsy are the foundations upon which is reared so colossal a structure!—how weak the arguments!—how inconclusive the evidence!

Well then, would you believe it, the circumstance which ought to shake the faith of the neophyte is precisely that which in most cases serves to fix it. Taking this proposition as a starting point, which they deem exempt even from the possibility of attack—viz., that whatever is taught in the name of Rome is infallibly true, the argument proceeds thus:—“Reason is inadequate to demonstrate such or such a truth; faith, therefore, is a matter of necessity.” And, closing their eyes, they precipitate themselves into the bosom of a faith justly called blind.

It is an analogous reasoning to what I have often heard repeated by sincere Roman Catholics after visiting the eternal city. Deeply affected by the scandals of every description pervading the city of the Pontiffs,

they deduced from these very scandals a proof of the divine nature of the Church of Rome, and of the permanent protection afforded to it by the Holy Ghost, alleging it to be manifest that that Church could not, without such protection, exist for an hour in the midst of such corruptions.

Nor is this all, although it would be something, no doubt, to have thus brought the young student in theology to admit as a necessity this belief in the Church. But, after having thoroughly impressed the idea in his mind that a simple doubt kills faith—after having exhibited in the most hideous colours all who have ever shaken off the yoke of Rome—then they extol beyond all measure the excellence of an humble submission to the authority of the priest—or what they term “*foi de charbonnier*” [faith of a charcoal burner—i.e., of an uncultivated, ignorant person]. Such a submission is incessantly placed before the pupil as the basis of all virtue, as the source of every grace, and of every light; and the result is that the neophyte, terrified and cajoled in turns, throws himself unhesitatingly into the extreme opinions opposite to that from which he has been warned. Not only does the shadow of a doubt terrify him—he flies from it as he would from the serpent of impurity. For this is another rule incessantly impressed upon him, that temptations against faith are to be placed in the same category as temptations against chastity: that the only security against such is in flight. Nay, he even goes beyond this—he at last comes to love faith for itself, and for the love of faith to despise, I had almost said to hate, reason. He persuades himself that there is supreme merit in believing without proof; he does not desire to examine, or to be convinced by any examination which he may make—he would rather preserve all the merits of an unreasoning assent.

I have read in the life of St. Louis [Louis IX. of France], that when some of his courtiers came to announce a miracle which he might have an opportunity of witnessing, by which our Lord showed himself visibly in the consecrated host, under the form of a child, the pious monarch replied—“Let those who doubt concerning the real presence in the holy sacrament go and see this miracle: for myself, I believe in that Presence as firmly as if I saw it bodily with my eyes.” I do not hesitate to assert, that the majority of our young ecclesiastics, on leaving the seminary, would be disposed to hold similar language under similar circumstances. Such is the state of belief to which it is possible at length to arrive by willing that one should believe; by continually repeating to one's self “I believe.”

I hope, sir, that your readers can now understand the two things which I proposed to myself to show in this letter—viz., how it happens that (at least in France) a Roman Priest may be sincere in his teaching, and in what sense it is true that he is a man of faith.

I am, with respect,

Your very humble servant,

C. MIEL.

PURGATORY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR—Permit me to make a few remarks on that point of Mr. Edmond Power's letter, in your last (No. 35, p. 135), which refers to myself.

The object of my previous letter (No. 31, p. 86) was to expose misquotations made by two of your Roman Catholic correspondents in their endeavour to prove “that the doctrine of Purgatory was taught by the early Fathers.” As Mr. Power has not attempted a justification on this head, I presume that he admits the accuracy of my references. He, however, calls in question one of my statements. He writes—

“Mr. Collette undertakes to disprove Purgatory! and in order to make this conclusion available to the end he proposes, he tells those for whose edification he writes, by an egregious mistake, no doubt, that, ‘according to the modern Roman doctrine, all the faithful—all those who die in the faith of Christ—go to Purgatory, before they can be in a fit condition to appear before God.’” Mr. Power then desires to know whence I learned this novel feature. He does not, however, deny such to be the teaching of his Church. He will admit that his Church makes a broad distinction between those who die in mortal and those in venial sins. Those who die in mortal sin go “to hell for all eternity” (Dr. Doyle's Abridgment of Christian Doctrine), and those who die in venial sins, we are told, “go to Purgatory till they have made full satisfaction for them, and then to heaven.” Then we read in the Catechism of the Council of Trent—“Besides this (namely, hell), there is a *purgatorial fire*, where the souls of the pious are, for a certain time, expiated by suffering, by which an entrance may be gained to the eternal abodes, into which nothing unclean can enter.”*

Pope Gregory I. (if, indeed, the work attributed to him by Romanists be genuine) stated, that the fire of Purgatory was for those only who had committed “*peccata minuta atque levissima*.”†

Now, I believe Mr. Power will admit that those who die in venial sin, and the “pious,” such as stated in the Cate-

* Cat. Conc. Trid., pars i., cap. iv., Quest. iii., p. 50. Lips. 1851.
† Gregor. Magn. Dialog., Lib. iv., c. 39.

chism, are the *faithful*, and such as die in the *faith of Christ*. All these must go to Purgatory before they go to heaven.

That *all*, and the best of us, have sinned, and do sin, cannot for a moment be denied. Let the following texts of Scripture be carefully examined on this head:—1 Kings viii. 46; Job xv. 14; xxv. 4; Ps. cxxx. 3; Pr. xx. 9; xxiv. 16; Eccl. vii. 20; 1 John i. 8.

The Blessed Virgin Mary herself is charged with errors and failings, even of want of faith, by many of the early Fathers, among whom we find Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Cyril of Alexandria.

Is Mr. Power prepared to assert that any one Christian dies without some taint of sin upon him, or wholly perfect? Now, Dr. Wiseman in his 11th Lecture, p. 57, vol. ii., London, 1851, writes—

"Moreover, we are assured in the New Law that 'nothing defiled shall enter' into the heavenly Jerusalem. Suppose, then, a Christian dies, *who had committed some slight transgression* [Is there any Christian who has not?], he cannot enter heaven in this state, and yet we cannot suppose that he is to be condemned for ever. What alternative, then, are we to admit? Why, that there is some place in which the soul will be purged of the sin, and qualified to enter into the glory of God. Will you say that God forgives all sin at the moment of death? Where is the warrant for that assertion? This is an *important point of doctrine*; and if you maintain that God at once forgives sins, on any occasion, you must allege strong authority for it. If you find nothing of such a doctrine in his revelation, but if, on the contrary, you are told—first, that no defilement can enter the kingdom of heaven; and, secondly, that some sins are forgiven in the next world, you must admit some means of purgation whereby the sinner, who has not incurred eternal punishment, is qualified for the enjoyment of God's glory."

Again, in explanation of the text from Rev. xxi. 27, we read in Keenan's "Controversial Catechism" (London, 1854), cap. xxi, sec. 2, p. 148—"There must be some place for the purification of souls after death; because the Scripture assures us, that even the *just man* falls seven times; and can any one in his senses suppose that many will not die without expiating these faults? With these they cannot enter heaven, which receiveth nothing defiled; they cannot be sent hell, for they are, according to Scripture, *just*; therefore, there must be a third place, where these failings of even the just man will be expiated."

Thus, then, it is very evident, that all Christians who do not die in mortal sins do go to Purgatory; they, nevertheless, are the *pious* who die in the *faith of Christ*.

I am quite aware that some Romanists assert that martyrs go direct to heaven and their sins are at once forgiven; but this is only a private opinion, and not a *doctrine* of the Church of Rome.

For instance, Keenan's Catechism (reference as above) in explaining away the text, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they shall rest from their labour," asserts that it "only alludes to martyrs and such as die free from all sin and debt of temporal punishment; and such, of course, required no purification." But this is not only an unsupported and unwarrantable interpretation of the text, to get over an obvious difficulty, but it assumes that any mortal can be declared to die "free from *all* sin;" free from (as Pope Gregory has it) of the lightest and most trivial sin for whom Purgatory is said to be reserved!

I think you, sir, at least, will agree with me, that I have made no "egregious blunder."

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

C. H. COLLETTE.

London, Nov. 18, 1854.

ON THE INFALLIBLE CHURCH.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR—I will begin this letter by saying, it is true that if the infallibility of the Church were to depend on the natural weakness and fallibility of the members who compose her, the unbeliever might have some specious pretence for refusing to submit to her authority. But the eternal wisdom of the Father, who "reacheth from end to end strongly, and disposeth all things sweetly," took especial care to provide His chaste spouse on earth with an infallible guide, to preserve the integrity of that faith which He had purified in His blood.

Now, it would be unreasonable and preposterous that the Church, in the law of nature, or the Mosaic law, should be endowed with greater privileges than the Church in the law of grace; yet we find, from the beginning of the world to the promulgation of the new law, that all true believers had, ordinarily, no other grounds for their infallible faith than the infallibility of the Church, or body of faithful then existing, in proposing the traditions which she or they had received. And it would be repugnant to the wisdom of Christ, and He would have acted contrary to all other legislators, if He had left a law, mysterious from its own nature, and subject to a thousand different interpretations, from the various interests, prejudices, and passions of those for whom it was intended, without having constituted an infallible judge to expound its meaning. What more simple than the obedience required from Catholics to the dictates of a Church with which Christ has promised to abide for ever? There is no one so humble, so ignorant, or unlettered, but may

safely follow this rule, which, with a Divine and admirable impartiality, renders the attainment of saving faith equally easy to all.

Common sense tells us, sir, that the Church which our Lord founded on earth, ought to possess the power of teaching by authority; and it is sufficiently clear that this is the only method whereby—

First—The ignorant, the dull of apprehension, and those who have not leisure to examine the Scriptures—that is to say, the greater part of mankind—can be at all instructed; whereby—

Secondly—The learned themselves can be so instructed as to remove all fluctuation and doubt from their minds; whereby—

Thirdly—Both learned and ignorant are furnished with the same motives of belief, and the same foundation for their faith; whereby—

Fourthly—All heresies, schisms, and dissensions about religion, are prevented; whereby—

Fifthly—The spirit of peace, of meekness, of humility, of diffidence in ourselves, of submission and obedience—that is to say, the characteristic virtues of a disciple of Christ—are inculcated, and are formed in us; whereby, that pride and presumption of the human heart, which, as St. Paul says, "raiseth itself up against the knowledge of God," is beaten down and subdued, and every understanding is made captive to the obedience of faith; whereby we are guarded against the wildness of imagination, the illusions of self-love, the spirit of party, the bias of education, the influence of prejudice, and so many sources of error and vice; whereby, in short, that holy, that rational, that amiable religion, which Christ brought down from heaven as a blessing to mankind, can be taught, can be enforced, and can be constantly maintained.

Now, as the method of instructing by authority is that which answers all these heavenly purposes, and leads man to virtue and happiness, in a manner conformable to his nature; and as the contrary method, whereby people are desired to shake off authority and judge for themselves, naturally leads to so great evils, and is so ill suited to the state and condition of mankind, it follows, undeniably, I repeat, that the Church of Christ has, and ought to have, power to exercise it. Indeed, Mr. Editor, in matters of faith and religion, we must be as humble and obedient to the Catholic Church as young children to their parents. "Amen, I say to you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a child, shall not enter into it."—St. Luke.

I remain, Sir,

Your very obedient servant,

WILLIAM ROURKE.

Passage.

Mr. Rourke observes that "from the beginning of the world to the promulgation of the new law, all true believers had, ordinarily, no other grounds for their infallible faith than the infallibility of the Church or body of faithful then existing." In saying this, he must surely have forgotten the state of the Jewish Church in the time of our Blessed Lord. We ask him, where was *then* the infallibility of the Church, at a time when of all others she most needed to be rightly instructed on the question of our Lord's claim to be the promised Messiah? Were not the chief priests and scribes our Lord's bitterest enemies? Did they not threaten to put out of the synagogue every Jew that believed on Him, and did they not finally condemn Him to death? Surely, if Mr. Rourke reflects on this for a moment, he cannot but see that the case of the Jewish Church is fatal to his favourite theory of infallibility. We have stated more than once that the Jews, as a visible existing Church, had far clearer evidences of divine guidance and instruction than any that the Church of Rome can point out. Yet we know that on the most important of all questions, the heads of the Jewish Church proved false and treacherous guides: and, if our Lord's hearers had not exercised their private judgment—if they had not "searched the Scriptures" which testified of Him, not one of them would have ever attained to a saving knowledge of the Gospel. What Pope of the Church of Rome could ever truly say that he prophesied, and spoke under the influence of the Holy Ghost? Yet we are told in Scripture that Caiaphas, who was high priest in the time of our Lord, did this, in virtue of the office that he held.—John xi. 51. And, nevertheless, he was the most active conspirator against the life of our blessed Lord. Arguing *a priori*, we might say, "what more simple than the obedience required" from a Jew "to the dictates of a Church with which God promised to abide? There is no one so humble, so ignorant or unlettered, but may safely follow this rule." Yet it is plain that if the Jews in our Lord's time had followed this *safe* and *simple* rule, they would most certainly have perilled their eternal salvation; and from hence we conclude that the promises which God has left to his Church, never can dispense with the duty incumbent on each member of the Church, to satisfy himself of the truth and reasonableness of the doctrines which she teaches.

We fully admit that the Church possesses the power of teaching by authority; all that we deny is, that this authority is an *infallible* authority. The example which Mr. Rourke adduces at the close of his letter sufficiently illustrates this distinction. Every parent has an autho-

rity over his child, to which the child is bound to submit; yet the parent is not infallible. He may command his child to do what is wrong, and if the child's moral faculties are sufficiently instructed to know this, it is clearly his duty to disobey his earthly parent, and to "obey God rather than man." It may, doubtless, seem to us, that mankind would have been placed in a more safe and secure position, as regards their spiritual welfare, if they were not exposed to the perils arising from error and unbelief, if no heresies existed in the Church, to draw the unwary from the truth—if, in short, the path to virtue and happiness was as plain and easy as Mr. Rourke would fain represent it. But the simple answer to all this is, that God has not willed it so. He has seen fit to place us in a position where we must exercise habits, not of blind, unquestioning submission to authority, but of sober, rational inquiry. These precautions are necessary, to secure our temporal welfare; and they are almost equally necessary for our spiritual well-being. In short, to use the words of the Apostle, it is our duty to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good."—1 Thess. v. 21.

ON PURGATORY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR—I have been brought up a Catholic, but have lived several years in a Protestant family, and amongst them the second coming of our Blessed Saviour and the end of the world are often talked of as being very near.

Now, without troubling myself as to whether or not they are right in the opinion of some of them hold on this matter, I do confess that I am troubled in my mind about one point connected with the end of the world, and the more I think of it the more it puzzles me. I would ask the question myself from a priest, but I was once told when I made an inquiry about another subject, "that such questions were only a tempting of God to take away my faith." The answer quieted me at that time, but I do not say and do not think it would satisfy me now.

The family I live in takes the CATHOLIC LAYMAN, and, as you must know, there have been many papers in it about Purgatory from both Catholic and Protestant, still there is one question about it that (as far as I have seen in these papers) has never been publicly asked, and, what is more, I have never read a word about it in any Catholic prayer-book I have now, or ever have had. It is not mentioned in any way in either the Daily Companion, the Garden of the Soul, the Key of Paradise, the Manna of the Soul, the Missal, or the Office for the Dead, or the notes to the Douay Bible. I can find no reference to it in either the double or single Douay Catechism, or any English or Irish one; still I do not mean to say that it has never been alluded to or explained, but only that I have never been able to find any mention of it.

Sir, I have not much expectation that you can tell me anything satisfactory on the subject; but I do hope that some one or other of the Catholic gentlemen who have written you such long and learned letters may assist you in doing away with my difficulty—I may say not mine only, but that of many others with whom I have talked about it. What I want to know is this—supposing the Protestant notion to be true, that the end of the world is really near at hand—say next week, or next month, or next year—what will become of me if I should die in venial sins so shortly before the Day of Judgment that I should not have time to atone for them by the pains of purgatory, or should not be released by masses or the private prayers of my relations and friends, or be taken out of Purgatory by the Blessed Virgin on account of the scapular, or any other of the means the Church has appointed for the release or relief of the souls in purgatory—I ask again, what is to become of me?

Ought I to be received in Heaven with some of my sins unsatisfied for, or must I be sent to Hell for sins that I have been taught do not deserve eternal punishment?

I know that you, sir, can get rid of my question at once by saying that you do not believe in purgatory, and that there is no use in your arguing about it. But I would gladly impress on you that to Catholics purgatory is a very terrible reality, which no unbelief on your part can destroy.

We have the testimony of many fathers of the Church to the fact of there being a purgatory; and that angelic doctor, St. Thomas, says—"That the pains of it exceed the pains which Jesus Christ suffered in his holy passion, which, notwithstanding, were the most bitter that ever any creature endured in this life; over and above which they are no tortures for an hour or a day, as those of this world, but they may, and do, last twenty, thirty, or a hundred years."

My mother has been dead more than fifty years, and prayers are still said for her on her anniversary. Her life was not half the length that mine has been, and I cannot think she committed more sins than I have done; yet the priests evidently show, by taking money for celebrating mass for her, that they think she still requires to be prayed for. What then, I ask for the third time, is to become of me if I should die within a short time of the Day of Judgment?

Sir, you say you are sincerely anxious that people should know what they ought to believe and trust to. Will you add your request to my supplication, that some of your